

FREMANTLE FORTRESS – LEIGHTON BATTERY
WW2 COASTAL DEFENCE FACILITIES

Engineering Heritage National Marker

Commemoration Ceremony
Leighton Battery
Saturday November 29, 2014



PROGRAM BOOKLET



TOWN OF
MOSMAN PARK



ENGINEERS
AUSTRALIA

Program

Acknowledgement of Traditional Ownership of Land

Formal welcome, recognition of distinguished guests and apologies

Professor Mark Bush, Chairman of Engineering Heritage Western Australia

Introduction by Professor Bush of Mr Will Neethling, President of Engineers Australia
Western Australian Division

Engineers Australia Engineering Heritage Recognition Program

Mr Will Neethling

An Introduction to Garrison Artillery in Western Australia

Brigadier A G Warner AM LVO

Representative Colonel Commandant, Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery

FREMANTLE – Port of Convoys – Strategic Naval Base

Mr Phillip Rowson

Royal Australian Artillery Historical Society WA

Unveiling of Engineering Heritage Australia Interpretation Panel

Brigadier A G Warner and Mr David Carter

Acceptance of panel

Mr David Carter, President, Royal Australian Artillery Historical Society

Closing Remarks

Professor Mark Bush

Following light refreshments, members of the RAAHS will be conducting tours of the battery for those who have indicated their interest.

(Cover photo: 6 inch gun emplacement, Leighton battery)

Engineering Heritage National Marker

In June 2014

Engineering Heritage
Australia advised

Engineering Heritage
Western Australia
that its nomination of

Fremantle Fortress –
Leighton Battery World War 2 Coastal
Defence Facilities met the assessment
criteria set down in Engineers Australia's
Heritage Recognition Program Guidelines
and had been awarded an Engineering
Heritage National Marker. The following is
a summary of the nomination document.



Fremantle Fortress and Leighton Battery

In the mid 1930s the Government of the Commonwealth of Australia commenced an upgrade of its fixed coastal defence artillery facilities to protect Australian ports from possible enemy attack.

On the west coast priority was given to upgrading and extending the coastal defence system for the Port of Fremantle by establishing new facilities on Rottnest and Garden Islands and modernising the existing batteries on the mainland at Leighton, Swanbourne, North Mole, Fremantle Harbour, South Beach and Point Peron. The combined facilities were known as "Fremantle Fortress".

The original plan for the defence of Fremantle was to place 9.2 inch guns on an elevated site at Buckland Hill in Mosman Park, but it was realised that this strategy would not have prevented long range bombardment of the port by cruisers equipped with 8 inch guns. It was then decided to locate the 9.2 inch guns at Oliver Hill on Rottnest Island which would have allowed engagement of hostile ships before they were in range to bombard the

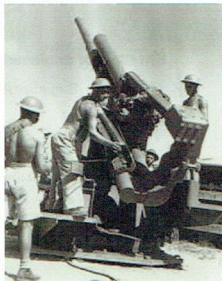
port. It was also decided to install 6 inch guns at Rottnest (Bickley Point), Arthur Head (Fremantle) and Fort Forrest (North Fremantle).

A subsequent decision was taken in mid 1935 to place the Fort Forrest guns at Swanbourne (north of Cottesloe). The reason for overlooking the superior Buckland Hill site was the proximity of the Perth to Fremantle railway and main road, plus the concern that the concussion of the guns would damage valuable instruments at the nearby Cottesloe cable station.

When war broke out on 3 September 1939 the 9 inch and 6 inch gun batteries at Rottnest were operational, as were the 6 inch gun batteries at Arthur Head and Swanbourne.

3.7 inch Anti-aircraft Battery Installation

In 1941 four 3.7 inch anti-aircraft guns were deployed to the Buckland Hill area and these became operational late in that year.



3.7 inch anti-aircraft gun and crew

In early 1942 consideration was given to re-locating the Arthur Head battery to Buckland Hill. A probable reason was

concerns by the Navy related to the increased level of shipping in Fremantle Harbour over which the Arthur Head battery would have to fire to defend the examination anchorage and Gage Roads. In June 1942 the decision was taken to relocate the Arthur Head battery to Buckland Hill (Leighton).

Leighton Examination Battery

It is not clear when construction commenced at the Buckland Hill site but in January/February 1943 three 6 inch guns were moved from Arthur Head. Proof firing of the Leighton Battery occurred on 8 February 1943. The designer was the Commonwealth Department of the Interior and construction was the responsibility of the 7th Troop of the Royal Australian Engineers, the Royal Australian Artillery and the Public Works Department of WA. The Leighton Battery was known as an Examination Battery. Its purpose was to keep a lookout for ships, and, when in view, to advise HQ if the ships were giving the correct identification signals. If a ship did not signal properly, the battery sighted the guns ready to fire, if instructed, a warning shot across the bow of the ship. The 6 inch guns at Leighton ceased operation in March 1945 and were relocated to the Princess Royal battery at Albany.

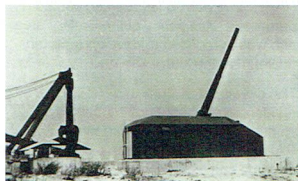
5.25 inch Batteries Planned for Fremantle Fortress

In the second half of 1942 consideration was given to the installation of 5.25 inch dual role coastal artillery/anti-aircraft gun batteries in Australia.

In early 1944 it was decided to install three 5.25 inch batteries at Leighton, South Fremantle and Point Peron. Work commenced at the Leighton site in May

1945, but due to financial constraints it was not completed until the second half of 1947 and the battery was proofed in November of that year. The installation of the South Fremantle battery was commenced but not completed and it was subsequently decided not to proceed with the Point Peron Battery.

Although 5.25 inch dual purpose guns were planned for the defence of every major port in Australia, the Leighton Battery was the only one which actually became operational.



5.25 inch Gun in AA mode (above) and coastal defence mode (below)

Post World War 2 Development

After WW2 the Leighton battery was used for regular army training, and from 1952 by the Citizens' Military Force, which was a significant part of the National Service Scheme. The Army continued to use the facilities at the site until 1963 when the

tunnels were closed by bulldozing the entrances.

In 1984 the Commonwealth relinquished its land at Buckland Hill and most of it was sold for re-development. Some land, including the area allocated to the battery, was set aside for public open space. The Owner of the site is the Town of Mosman Park, with whom management of the site was vested by the Government of Western Australia Department of Regional Development.

The Royal Australian Artillery Historical Society of Western Australia (Inc) – RAAHSWA was subsequently granted permissive occupancy of the Battery area and was authorised to develop a military museum at the site.

The developer of Buckland Hill Estate, the residential area south of the battery, worked with the members of the RAAHSWA to conserve the battery tunnels and gun emplacements. During the late 1980s and the 1990s the restoration of the site and conservation work of the battery facilities was undertaken, financed by grants from Commonwealth and State agencies.

The restored Leighton Battery was officially opened, under that name, on 29 November, 1997, by His Excellency Major General Michael Jeffrey AO MC, Governor of Western Australia.

Heritage Listings

The Australian Heritage Commission placed the battery on the Register of the National Estate on 22 June 1993. It was given National Trust Classification on 13 May 1996 and it was accorded a Permanent Entry in the Western Australian Register of Heritage Places on 27 August 1999.

Statement of Significance

The Leighton Battery, the conserved remains of a mostly underground World War 2 artillery defence installation, comprising a complex of tunnels, various engine, magazine and rest rooms, an observation post, a semi-buried command post, two 6 inch gun emplacements, two 5.25 inch gun emplacements (one of which remains buried), a radar hut, access roads and limestone retaining walls, and the surrounding open space, has cultural and national significance for the following reasons :-

- The battery was an important part of Fremantle Fortress, the coastal defence network established prior to and during World War 2 to protect the Port of Fremantle from enemy sea and air attack.
- The extensive underground defence facility tunnel network is an excellent example of technical achievement.
- The site is a remnant of a much larger military complex which occupied most of Buckland Hill after 1941.
- It is the site of the only 5.25 inch dual use coastal/anti-aircraft battery, of the eight that were planned to protect Australian ports during World War 2, which actually became operational.
- The facilities, and the high level of military interpretation on display, are of considerable significance to men and women who served in Australian Army artillery units in World War 2, and in succeeding wars, as well as of interest to the general public.

Acknowledgements

Engineering Heritage Western Australia acknowledges that it has used the following documents in the preparation of the nomination and this program.

The Western Australian State Heritage
Office: Documentation leading to
Permanent Entry on the WA State Register
of Heritage Places 27 August 1999

Buckland Hill as a Defence Site –
Beginnings: Matthew Adams

The Leighton Battery Heritage Site:
www.artillerywa.org.au/raahs/leighton

The Leighton Battery Virtual Tour:
www.artillerywa.org.au/vtour/vtour

Engineering Heritage WA: Nomination of
Fremantle Fortress – Rottne Island WW2
Coastal Defence Facilities for an

Engineering Heritage National Landmark
2010

The Royal Australian Artillery Association
WA (Inc): Brochure of Project 2013
Celebrating 75 Years of Artillery History in
Western Australia.

The support of the Council and staff of the
Town of Mosman Park, the Mosman Park
RSL, the National Servicemen's
Association and the Committee of the
Royal Australian Artillery Historical Society
WA, and in particular, Mr Don Rae, is
gratefully acknowledged.



Aerial view of battery site c. 1947 showing the three 5.25 inch gun installations

